

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AS-01 SNM-02 H-01 DEAE-00 CIAE-00
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NSC-05 OES-07 OMB-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 AID-05
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3735

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 1910

FOR S/NM DAVID ERNST

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, BM

SUBJ: CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY BY DR. PETER BOUNE

REF: STATE 154138

1. THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE KEYED TO REFTEL PARAS A-F:

A. WE DO NOT KNOW OF ANY SHAN OPIUM HARVESTED BY BURMESE SOLDIERS SINCE INITIATION OUR PROGRAM. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS COULD BE HARVESTED. MOST OPIUM IN BURMA IS GROWN IN REMOTE AREAS WHERE BURMESE SOLDIERS PENETRATE ONLY IN FORCE AND UNDER CONTROL.

IN MORE SECURE AREAS, POPPY CROP DESTRUCTION HAS BEEN VIGOROUS AND SUCCESSFUL. DR. BOURNE AND EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE PERSONALLY SEEN LARGE AREAS OF RECENTLY DESTROYED POPPY FIELDS. THE SECURE PARTS OF THE SHAN STATE CAN BE AND HAVE BEEN VISITED AND OBSERVED BY EMBASSY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES, AND WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF BURMA ARMY HARVESTING IN THOSE PARTS.

B. HELICOPTERS SUPPLIED UNDER BURMA PROGRAM HAVE NOT BEEN USED TO BURN RICE FIELDS. THEY HAVE BEEN USED TO LIFT TROOPS AND POLICE TO POPPY GROWING AREAS TO CONDUCT POPPY ERADICATION OPERATIONS. THE MISSION HAS SEEN NO EVIDENCE
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SUGGESTING THAT AMERICAN-SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN USED IN THE INTENTIONAL DESTRUCTION OF ANY CROPS OTHER THAN POPPY. THE NORMAL METHOD EMPLOYED BY THE BURMA ARMY AND OTHER GUB ELEMENTS IS TO CUT DOWN THE POPPY PLANTS BY HAND USING BAMBOO STICKS. FYI: PARTICULARLY DURING THE BURMA ARMY'S SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN AGAINST BCP INSURGENTS IN THE PEGU YOMA (1974-75) THERE WAS SOME DELIBERATE DESTRUCTION OF FOOD SUPPLIES.

BUT US-SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT WERE NOT USED. END FYI.

C. THERE IS PROBABLY A MORAL DILEMMA IN ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT WHERE POVERTY IS THE MOTIVATING FORCE FOR CRIME. POOR FARMERS WHO SIMPLY GROW OPIUM ARE INDEED IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. THEY ARE INTIMIDATED, TAXED, OR EVEN MURDERED BY THE INSURGENT/ TRAFFICKING GROUPS AND WHERE POSSIBLE THEIR POPPY FIELDS ARE DESTROYED BY THE BURMA ARMY. CROP SUBSTITUTION IS A PART OF THE ANSWER, AND IN SECURE OR RELATIVELY SECURE AREAS, WHERE THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING SUBSTITUTES, THERE IS A SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM. IN THE INSECURE AREAS THE BURMA ARMY HAS LITTLE TIME FOR ATTACKS ON FARMERS. ATTACKS ON CARAVANS AND REFINERY COMPLEXES (E.G., MOHEINS ONE, TWO AND THREE) ARE THE PATTERN.

THE GUB HAS TENTATIVELY DECIDED AGAINST HERBICIDES FOR FEAR OF DAMAGE OF THE SOIL. IF IT BECOMES POSSIBLE TO KILL ONLY POPPY WE HOPE EVENTUALLY THAT THE BURMESE DECIDE TO USE HERBICIDES.

D. (1) BURMA ARMY UNITS HAVE INTERDICTED, HAS SHADOWED, HARASSED AND ATTACKED CARAVANS MOVING RAW OPIUM FROM NORTH BURMA TO THE THAI BORDER AREA. IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, THESE EFFORTS HAVE LED SEVERAL TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS TO ABANDON CARAVAN OPERATIONS FOR LESS RISKY PURSUITS. IN SEPTEMBER 1975 THE SINGLE LARGEST CARAVAN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION, THE THIRD CHINESE IRREGULAR FORCES, WAS PERMANENTLY KNOCKED OUT OF THE LONG HAUL CARAVAN BUSINESS WHEN ITS BASES IN BURMA WERE OVERUN AND DESTROYED.

(2) BY THE 1976 CARAVAN SEASON, ONLY ONE MAJOR TRAFFICKING
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ORGANIZATION, THE SHAN UNITED ARMY (SUA), WAS RUNNING LARGE-SCALE NORTH/SOUTH CARAVANS. ALL FOUR OF ITS CARAVANS IN 1976 WERE HARASSED BLOCKED AND DELAYED BY PURSUING BURMA ARMY UNITS. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SUCCESS CAME IN SEPTEMBER 1976 WHEN ONE OF THE CARAVANS WAS BOTTLED UP IN CENTRAL BURMA AND LOST 15 DEAD AND OVER 1,100 KILOGRAMS OF OPIUM BEFORE IT COULD SLIP AWAY. (THIS SUCCESS RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PRESS COVERAGE AND THE MISSION OBTAINED FROM THE BURMESE AFTER-ACTION PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWING THE SITE OF THE BATTLE, SEIZED NARCOTICS AND EQUIPMENT, AND PROMINENTLY FEATURING THE BELL HELICOPTERS.) IN 1977 THE BURMESE HAVE CONTINUED TO TRACK AND PURSUE SUA CARAVANS. A PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT WAS FOUGHT WITH THE ONLY CARAVAN TO HEAD SOUTH THIS YEAR.

(3) ATTACKS ON THE BASIC MOVEMENT AND REFINING STRUCTURE DO AS MUCH TO HALT THE TRAFFIC AS CARAVAN "CAPTURES" WOULD. THE THREE "MOHEIN" OPERATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE PRODUCED SIGNIFICANT RESULTS: MOHEIN ONE (APRIL 1976) - ONE OF THE LARGEST REFINERIES IN BURMA WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED WITH SEIZURES OF 14 KILOS OF PURE HEROIN, OVER ONE TON OF RAW OPIUM, 440 GALLONS OF REFINED OPIATES AND LARGE STORES OF CHEMICALS; MOHEIN TOW (JANUARY 1977) - OVER 700 BURMA ARMY TROOPS ATTACKED A CLUSTER OF REFINERIES SOUTH OF THE MAE KHAM SALIENT ON THE BURMA/THAI BORDER;

MOHEIN THREE (JUNE 1977) - A TWO PRONGED ATTACK BY WELL OVER 1,000 BURMESE TROOPS ON REFINERIES AND FORTIFIED TRAFFICKING POSITIONS ALONG THE BURMA/THAI BORDER ADJACENT TO MAE HONG SON PROVINCE (FIVE REFINERY/TRAFFICKING BASES WERE DESTROYED WITH SEIZURES, TO DATE, OF 55 KILOS OF MORPHINE BASE AS WELL AS CHEMICALS AND REFINING EQUIPMENT.) THE BURMESE HAVE INFORMED US OF THEIR INTENTION TO CONTINUE THESE MILITARY OPERATIONS TO CLOSE DOWN THE REFINERIES ALONG THE BORDER. (SUGGEST IT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL FOR DEPT ALSO TO REFER TO INTELLIGENCE COVERAGE OF MOHEIN THREE. THEI LARGE-SCALE AND SUCCESSFUL OPERATION HAS SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED ONE OF THE LARGEST HEROIN REFINERY COMPLEXES DISCOVERED TO DATE IN ASIA.)

(4) IT IS THUS FAIR TO SAY THAT BURMESE INTER-DICTION HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE CURRENT
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DOWNTURN IN TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES IN BURMA, EVEN THOUGH THE BURMA ARMY HAS YET TO CAPTURE OR DESTROY IN ITS ENTIRETY A MAJOR OPIUM CARAVAN (I.E., A CARAVAN WITH OVER 200 ARMED MEN AND SEVERAL HUNDRED PACK ANIMALS). MANY LARGE CARAVANS TAKE TO THE HILLS (OR JUNGLE) TO AVOID CAPTURE. THE FACT THAT ONLY ONE SOUTHBOUND CARAVAN HAS BEEN ATTEMPTED THIS YEAR TO DATE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

E. AS THE DEPT IS AWARE, THE MISSION HAS DEVELOPED INDEPENDENT MEANS TO MONITOR THE USE OF THE HELICOPTERS. THIS MECHANISM PERMITS US TO STATE WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF CERTAINTY THAT THE HELICOPTERS ARE BEING USED AS PRESCRIBED BY THE US/GUB AGREEMENT. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US INDEPENDENTLY THROUGH VARIOUS SOURCES HAS INVARIABLY COINCIDED WITH GUB ASSERTIONS AND ASSURANCES.

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3736

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 RANGOON 1910

F. THIS QUESTION CAN BEST BE ANSWERED BY THE VARIOUS AGENCY HEADQUARTERS INVOLVED. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE GUB ON NARCOTICS MATTERS HAS INVARIABLY BEEN PROVEN ACCURATE WHEN CROSS CHECKED. THERE MAY BE GAPS IN OUR INFORMATION BUT WITH THE SEVERAL INFORMATION GATHERING MECHANISMS OF THE USG MAKING VERY SUBSTANTIAL INPUTS OF INFORMATION ON NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES IN BURMA IT STRAINS CREDULITY TO BELIEVE THAT ANYONE ELSE'S IS MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND ACCURATE THAN OUR OWN - OR INDEED ANYWHERE NEAR AS GOOD.

2. ESSENTIAL TO THE ENTIRE BURMA NARCOTICS PROGRAM IS AN ASSESSMENT OF THE GUB'S COMMITMENT TO NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO BELABOR THE POINT THAT THE GUB IS AWARE THAT TRAFFICKERS ARE ALSO INSURGENTS AND THAT SUPPRESSION OF INSURGENCY IS A PRIMARY NATIONAL INTEREST. IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE GUB SEES NARCOTICS AS A DEADLY THREAT AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES ARE MASSIVELY, BY LOCAL STANDARDS, ENGAGED IN SENSITIZING THE POPULATION TO THAT THREAT. FOR EXAMPLE, A RECENT ANTI-NARCOTICS EXHIBITION IN RANGOON DREW OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE. THE GUB'S ATTITUDE WAS FORCEFULLY EXPRESSED IN A JULY 2 EDITORIAL IN THE STATE-OWNED WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY. THE MOHEIN THREE COMMANDER WAS
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QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HIS STILL ONGOING OPERATION "WAS TO BRING ABOUT DESTRUCTION OF NARCOTIC DRUGS WHICH IF ALLOWED TO PROLIFERATE UNCHECKED COULD ULTIMATELY BRING ABOUT THE EXTINCTION OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE ... THE SUPPRESSION OF OPIUM PRODUCTION REFINING IS A JOB WHICH BURMA HAS BEEN DOING WITH FULL CONSCIOUSNESS OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS HUMANITY AS A WHOLE ..." THE PAPER ADDED "OPERATION MOHEIN THREE REPRESENTS IN A MICROCOSM THE WAY IN WHICH WE GET THINGS DONE IN BURMA IN OUR FIGHT AGAINST THE WORLDWIDE NARCOTICS THREAT. IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES OUR UNFLAGGING WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH NEIGHBOR NATIONS IN FULL MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDLY COOPERATION.
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